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THE  
**LAMENT OF TASSO.**

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THIRD EDITION.

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**1s. 6d.**

T. DAVISON, LOMBARD-STREET, WHITEFRIARS, LONDON.



THE

LAMENT OF TASSO.

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BY LORD BYRON.

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THIRD EDITION.

P23085

LONDON:

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE-STREET.

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1817.

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At Ferrara (in the library) are preserved the original MSS. of Tasso's Gierusalemme and of Guarini's Pastor Fido, with letters of Tasso, one from Titian to Ariosto; and the inkstand and chair, the tomb and the house of the latter. But as misfortune has a greater interest for posterity, and little or none for the cotemporary, the cell where Tasso was confined in the hospital of St. Anna attracts a more fixed attention than the residence or the monument of Ariosto—at least it had this effect on me. There are two inscriptions, one on the outer gate, the second over the cell itself, inviting, unnecessarily, the wonder and the indignation of the spectator. Ferrara is much decayed, and depopulated; the castle still exists entire; and I saw the court where Parisina and Hugo were beheaded, according to the annal of Gibbon.

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P 23085

1850

Received of the Treasurer of the  
County of ... the sum of ...  
for ...

1850

THE  
LAMENT OF TASSO.

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I.

LONG years!—It tries the thrilling frame to bear  
And eagle-spirit of a Child of Song—  
Long years of outrage, calumny, and wrong ;  
Imputed madness, prisoned solitude,  
And the mind's canker in its savage mood,  
When the impatient thirst of light and air  
Parches the heart ; and the abhorred grate,  
Marring the sunbeams with its hideous shade,  
Works through the throbbing eyeball to the brain  
With a hot sense of heaviness and pain ;  
And bare, at once, Captivity displayed  
Stands scoffing through the never-opened gate,  
Which nothing through its bars admits, save day

And tasteless food, which I have eat alone  
Till its unsocial bitterness is gone ;  
And I can banquet like a beast of prey,  
Sullen and lonely, couching in the cave  
Which is my lair, and—it may be—my grave.  
All this hath somewhat worn me, and may wear,  
But must be borne. I stoop not to despair ;  
For I have battled with mine agony,  
And made me wings wherewith to overfly  
The narrow circus of my dungeon wall,  
And freed the Holy Sepulchre from thrall ;  
And revelled among men and things divine,  
And poured my spirit over Palestine,  
In honour of the sacred war for him,  
The God who was on earth and is in heaven,  
For he hath strengthened me in heart and limb.  
That through this sufferance I might be forgiven,  
I have employed my penance to record  
How Salem's shrine was won, and how adored.

## II.

But this is o'er—my pleasant task is done :—  
My long-sustaining friend of many years !

If I do blot thy final page with tears,  
Know, that my sorrows have wrung from me none.  
But thou, my young creation! my soul's child!  
Which ever playing round me came and smiled,  
And wooed me from myself with thy sweet sight,  
Thou too art gone—and so is my delight:  
And therefore do I weep and inly bleed  
With this last bruise upon a broken reed.  
Thou too art ended—what is left me now?  
For I have anguish yet to bear—and how?  
I know not that—but in the innate force  
Of my own spirit shall be found resource.  
I have not sunk, for I had no remorse,  
Nor cause for such: they called me mad—and why?  
Oh Leonora! wilt not *thou* reply?  
I was indeed delirious in my heart  
To lift my love so lofty as thou art;  
But still my frenzy was not of the mind;  
I knew my fault, and feel my punishment  
Not less because I suffer it unbent.  
That thou wert beautiful, and I not blind,  
Hath been the sin which shuts me from mankind;  
But let them go, or torture as they will,

My heart can multiply thine image still ;  
 Successful love may sate itself away,  
 The wretched are the faithful ; 'tis their fate  
 To have all feeling save the one decay,  
 And every passion into one dilate,  
 As rapid rivers into ocean pour ;  
 But ours is fathomless, and hath no shore.

### III.

Above me, hark ! the long and maniac cry  
 Of minds and bodies in captivity.  
 And hark ! the lash and the increasing howl,  
 And the half-inarticulate blasphemy !  
 There be some here with worse than frenzy foul,  
 Some who do still goad on the o'er-laboured mind,  
 And dim the little light that's left behind  
 With needless torture, as their tyrant will  
 Is wound up to the lust of doing ill :  
 With these and with their victims am I classed,  
 'Mid sounds and sights like these long years have  
     passed ;  
 'Mid sights and sounds like these my life may close :  
 So let it be—for then I shall repose.



## IV.

I have been patient, let me be so yet ;  
I had forgotten half I would forget,  
But it revives—oh ! would it were my lot  
To be forgetful as I am forgot !—  
Feel I not wroth with those who bade me dwell  
In this vast lazar-house of many woes ?  
Where laughter is not mirth, nor thought the mind,  
Nor words a language, nor ev'n men mankind ;  
Where cries reply to curses, shrieks to blows,  
And each is tortured in his separate hell—  
For we are crowded in our solitudes—  
Many, but each divided by the wall,  
Which echoes Madness in her babbling moods ;—  
While all can hear, none heed his neighbour's call—  
None ! save that One, the veriest wretch of all,  
Who was not made to be the mate of these,  
Nor bound between Distraction and Disease.  
Feel I not wroth with those who placed me here ?  
Who have debased me in the minds of men,  
Debarring me the usage of my own,  
Blighting my life in best of its career,  
Branding my thoughts as things to shun and fear ?

Would I not pay them back these pangs again,  
And teach them inward sorrow's stifled groan?  
The struggle to be calm, and cold distress,  
Which undermines our Stoical success?  
No!—still too proud to be vindictive—I  
Have pardoned princes' insults, and would die.  
Yes, Sister of my Sovereign! for thy sake  
I weed all bitterness from out my breast,  
It hath no business where *thou* art a guest;  
Thy brother hates—but I can not detest;  
Thou pitiest not—but I can not forsake.

## V.

Look on a love which knows not to despair,  
But all unquenched is still my better part,  
Dwelling deep in my shut and silent heart  
As dwells the gathered lightning in its cloud,  
Encompassed with its dark and rolling shroud,  
Till struck,—forth flies the all-etherial dart!  
And thus at the collision of thy name  
The vivid thought still flashes through my frame,  
And for a moment all things as they were  
Flit by me;—they are gone—I am the same.

And yet my love without ambition grew ;  
I knew thy state, my station, and I knew  
A princess was no love-mate for a bard ;  
I told it not, I breathed it not, it was  
Sufficient to itself, its own reward ;  
And if my eyes revealed it, they, alas !  
Were punished by the silentness of thine,  
And yet I did not venture to repine.  
Thou wert to me a crystal-girded shrine,  
Worshipped at holy distance, and around  
Hallowed and meekly kissed the saintly ground ;  
Not for thou wert a princess, but that Love  
Had robed thee with a glory, and arrayed  
Thy lineaments in beauty that dismayed—  
Oh ! not dismayed—but awed, like One above ;  
And in that sweet severity there was  
A something which all softness did surpass—  
I know not how—thy genius mastered mine—  
My star stood still before thee :—if it were  
Presumptuous thus to love without design,  
That sad fatality hath cost me dear ;  
But thou art dearest still, and I should be  
Fit for this cell, which wrongs me, but for *thee*.

The very love which locked me to my chain  
Hath lightened half its weight ; and for the rest,  
Though heavy, lent me vigour to sustain,  
And look to thee with undivided breast,  
And foil the ingenuity of Pain.

## VI.

It is no marvel—from my very birth  
My soul was drunk with love, which did pervade  
And mingle with whate'er I saw on earth ;  
Of objects all inanimate I made  
Idols, and out of wild and lonely flowers,  
And rocks, whereby they grew, a paradise,  
Where I did lay me down within the shade  
Of waving trees, and dreamed uncounted hours,  
Though I was chid for wandering ; and the wise  
Shook their white aged heads o'er me, and said  
Of such materials wretched men were made,  
And such a truant boy would end in woe,  
And that the only lesson was a blow ;  
And then they smote me, and I did not weep,  
But cursed them in my heart, and to my haunt  
Returned and wept alone, and dreamed again

The visions which arise without a sleep.  
And with my years my soul began to pant  
With feelings of strange tumult and soft pain ;  
And the whole heart exhaled into One Want,  
But undefined and wandering, till the day  
I found the thing I sought—and that was thee ;  
And then I lost my being all to be  
Absorbed in thine—the world was past away—  
*Thou* didst annihilate the earth to me !

## VII.

I loved all solitude—but little thought  
To spend I know not what of life, remote  
From all communion with existence, save  
The maniac and his tyrant ; had I been  
Their fellow, many years ere this had seen  
My mind like theirs corrupted to its grave,  
But who hath seen me writhe, or heard me rave ?  
Perchance in such a cell we suffer more  
Than the wrecked sailor on his desert shore ;  
The world is all before him—*mine* is *here*,  
Scarce twice the space they must accord my bier.

What though *he* perish, he may lift his eye  
And with a dying glance upbraid the sky—  
I will not raise my own in such reproof,  
Although 'tis clouded by my dungeon roof.

## VIII.

Yet do I feel at times my mind decline,  
But with a sense of its decay :—I see  
Unwonted lights along my prison shine,  
And a strange demon, who is vexing me  
With pilfering pranks and petty pains, below  
The feeling of the healthful and the free ;  
But much to One, who long hath suffered so,  
Sickness of heart, and narrowness of place,  
And all that may be borne, or can debase.  
I thought mine enemies had been but man,  
But spirits may be leagued with them—all Earth  
Abandons—Heaven forgets me ;—in the dearth  
Of such defence the Powers of Evil can,  
It may be, tempt me further, and prevail  
Against the outworn creature they assail.  
Why in this furnace is my spirit proved



Like steel in tempering fire? because I loved?  
Because I loved what not to love, and see,  
Was more or less than mortal, and than me.

## IX.

I once was quick in feeling—that is o'er;—  
My scars are callous, or I should have dashed  
My brain against these bars as the sun flashed  
In mockery through them;—if I bear and bore  
The much I have recounted, and the more  
Which hath no words, 'tis that I would not die  
And sanction with self-slaughter the dull lie  
Which snared me here, and with the brand of shame  
Stamp madness deep into my memory,  
And woo compassion to a blighted name,  
Sealing the sentence which my foes proclaim.  
No—it shall be immortal!—and I make  
A future temple of my present cell,  
Which nations yet shall visit for my sake.  
While thou, Ferrara! when no longer dwell  
The ducal chiefs within thee, shalt fall down,  
And crumbling piecemeal view thy hearthless halls,  
A poet's wreath shall be thine only crown,

A poet's dungeon thy most far renown,  
While strangers wonder o'er thy unpeopled walls!  
And thou, Leonora! thou—who wert ashamed  
That such as I could love—who blushed to hear  
To less than monarchs that thou couldst be dear,  
Go! tell thy brother that my heart, untamed  
By grief, years, weariness—and it may be  
A taint of that he would impute to me—  
From long infection of a den like this,  
Where the mind rots congenial with the abyss,  
Adores thee still;—and add—that when the towers  
And battlements which guard his joyous hours  
Of banquet, dance, and revel, are forgot,  
Or left untended in a dull repose,  
This—this shall be a consecrated spot!  
But Thou—when all that Birth and Beauty throws  
Of magic round thee is extinct—shalt have  
One half the laurel which o'ershades my grave.  
No power in death can tear our names apart,  
As none in life could rend thee from my heart.  
Yes, Leonora! it shall be our fate  
To be entwined for ever—but too late!





1811

18

On the 1st of January 1811  
I received from the  
Honble Board of Directors  
of the Bank of England  
the sum of £100,000  
in full of the loan  
of £1,000,000  
which was made  
on the 1st of January 1810

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I received from the  
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